

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEHRAN 02460 091358Z

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SUB: TEHRAN TRADE CENTER

REF: STATE 45348

1. EMBASSY, OF COURSE, CONCURS ENTIRELY IN WASHINGTON'S JUDGMENT THAT DIRECTOR OF U.S. TRADE CENTER SHOULD HAVE DIPLOMATIC STATUS. WE HAVE NOT PURSUED THIS MATTER FURTHER WITH THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN THE BELIEF THAT SUCH COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE TO NO AVAIL. THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT MFA'S LEGAL ADVISOR, PROBABLY WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER, HOLDS STRONG VIEW THAT CENTER SHOULD BE RECLASSIFIED AS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION AND REGISTERED AS SUCH WITH THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE. UNDER THIS SCHEME, NO AMERICAN WORKING IN USTC WOULD BE PERMITTED TO HAVE A DIPLOMATIC TITLE. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, AMBASSADOR HELMS HAS BROACHED THIS MATTER WITH THE MINISTER OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND FINANCE ANSARY WHO HAS NOT YET GIVEN A DEFINITIVE REPLY. ANSARY NOW HAS BEFORE HIM THE TROUBLESMOME QUESTION OF THE STATUS OF THE FHWA TEAM AND WE ARE LOATHE TO HIT HIM AT THIS TIME WITH YET ANOTHER STATUS PROBLEM. EMBASSY WOULD PROPOSE THAT MATTER OF DIPLOMATIC STATUS FOR DAHMLOW'S SUCCESSOR, TOGETHER WITH STATUS OF CENTER ITSELF AS INTEGRAL PART OF EMBASSY, BE HELD IN ABEYANCE UNTIL AMBASSADOR'S RETURN. EMBASSY WOULD POINT OUT THAT AS A RESULT OF DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN MFA AND MOEAF, PROTOCOL OFFICE OF MFA HAS FINALLY AGREED TO DUTY FREE CLEARANCE OF VON STROEBEL'S EFFECTS

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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 02460 091358Z

EVEN THOUGH HE DOES NOT HAVE DIPLOMATIC TITLE. WE WOULD HOPE THAT

ANSARY WOULD SIMILARLY PREVAIL UPON MFA IN THE MATTER OF STATUS OF USTC AND ITS DIRECTOR.

2. TRADE CENTER DIRECTOR DAHMLOW REPORTS THAT CUSTOMS SITUATION HAS MATERIALLY IMPROVED. APPROXIMATELY ONE WEEK AGO IN A CONFERENCE WITH CUSTOMS THE LATTER AGREED TO CONSOLIDATION OF AIR SHIPMENTS. ASIDE FROM THIS PROBLEM, NOW RESOLVED, THE BULK OF CUSTOMS PROBLEMS HAVE ARISEN IN CONNECTION WITH LATE SHIPMENTS FROM THE U.S. REQUIRING ASKING FAVORS OF CUSTOMS. INEVITABLY PROBLEMS AROSE. NOW THAT SHIPMENTS ARE ARRIVING FROM THE U.S. IN A TIMELY FASHION, PROBLEMS ON THIS FRONT HAVE VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED. FOR EXAMPLE, TRADE CENTER REPORTS ALTOGHETHER SATISFACTORY CLEARANCES OF ALL SHIPMENTS FOR FEBRUARY 1976 ENERGY SHOW. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT HIGH LEVEL APPROACH TO THE GOI ON THIS SUBJECT IS AT THIS TIME INDICATED.

3. WHILE THE NEW LANDLORD OF RECORD (SASSANIAN CORPORATION, WHICH OWNS THE AMERICAN HOSPITAL) VERY MUCH WOULD LIKE TRADE CENTER TO VACATE THE PREMISES, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN USTC/EMBASSY AND LANDLORD IS BY NO MEANS ACRIMONIOUS. WE HAVE TAKEN THE GENERAL LINE WITH THE NEW OWNERS THAT OUR LEGAL POSITON IS STRONG AND THAT WE COULD NOT CONSIDER MOVING TO OTHER QUARTERS UNLESS SUCH WERE EQUIVALENT TO PRESENT SITE IN SIZE AND AT NO INCREASED COST. FAILING THIS, EMBASSY/TRADE ENTER HAPPY TO CONSIDER WHATEVER ALTERNATIVES LANDLORD MIGHT CARE TO SUGGEST. MOST RECENTLY, IT WAS AGREED IN CONVERSATION BETWEEN LANDLORD AND JOHN HALDANE OF CAGNE THAT LATTER WOULD SEEK TO HAVE QUALIFIED US COMPANY PREPARE DESIGN OF A MODEL USTC FOR SASSANIAN CORPORATION'S CONSIDERATION. THEREAFTER, SASSANIAN WOULD REPORT AS TO HOW MUCH STRUCTURE WOULD COST. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE SASSANIAN HAS OFFERED TO CONSTRUCT A BUILDING ON EMBASSY COMPOUND AT A COST TO IT OF APPROXIMATELY \$70,000. WE ESTIMATE THIS WOULD BE THE UPPER LIMIT, AT LEAST AT THIS TIME, OF WHAT SASSANIAN WOULD PAY TO INDUCE TRADE CENTER TO LEAVE PRESENT PREMISES. SUITABLE QUARTERS FOR USTC HAVING EQUIVLANT SPACE PROBABLY COULD NOT NOW BE OBTAINED IN TEHRAN FOR LESS THAN \$300,000 A YEAR. THESE IS LITTLE POSSIBILITY THAT SASSANIAN WOULD FUND ON AN ON-GOING BASIS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRESENT RENT (LEASE HAS SIX MORE YEARS TO RUN) AND GOING RENT FOR ALTERNATIVE SITE. MEANWHILE, AMERICAN HOSPITAL SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN EARLY APRIL. IN THE MONTHS THEREAFTER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TEHRAN 02460 091358Z

LANDLORD WILL PRESUMABLY COME TO HAVE A CLEARER IDEA OF HOSPITAL'S PRECISE ADDITIONAL SPACE REQUIREMENTS.

FYI: WASHINGTON ATTORNEY, WALTER SURREY, WHO REPRESENTS CHARTER MEDICAL IN OTHER COUNTRIES, HAS TOLD EMBASSY THAT HE WILL MAKE INQUIRIEIS IN WASHINGTON, INCLUDING ON THE HILL, CONCERNING THE LEGAL PROHIBITIONS THAT MAY EXIST ON ERECTING TRADE CENTER SITE ON EMBASSY COMPOUND.

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